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Christopher J. Mutui Kinyua

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Influence of Managerial Oversight on the Performance of Public Hospitals in Embu County, Kenya

Kinyua Christopher J. Muturi

Department of Public Policy & Administration, Kenyatta University, Kenya

Email: christopherjohnsonmuturi@gmail.com

Abstract

Public hospitals (PHs) worldwide operate better when managerial oversight is in place. This study sought to assess how managerial oversight influences the performance of Embu County PHs in Kenya. The key goal of the study was to establish the use of efficiency, employee satisfaction, and customer satisfaction levels to evaluate performance in PHs. Given the paucity of research in managerial oversight on the administration of PHs, particularly in Embu County, this research addressed management's difficulties in helping County Governments (CGs) develop policies and strategic direction. The theoretical framework for managerial oversight was modeled by goal-setting theory. Using questionnaires, data was collected from 140 respondents. Sixty of the respondents were health professionals and eighty were clients of PHs. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0 was used to analyze quantitative data using descriptive statistics expressed as percentages, mean scores, and frequencies. Ms Excel was also used to draw graphs and charts. Utilizing the content analysis method, qualitative data was also analyzed. The major findings showed that 66.7% of health professionals agreed that PHs had successful corporate goals that improved performance. The study recommended that Embu County should further implement corporate goals in PHs to help management develop successful team goals and provide general direction for the organization.

Keywords: Managerial Oversight, County Government (CG), Public Hospitals (PHs)

1. Introduction

Cuomo et al (2016) pointed out that institutions and their stakeholders must combine corporate policy with best practices. In the public sector, promoting oversight of state organs was constitutionalized to ensure the executive remains accountable to its subjects. Only then did accountability and oversight become essential concepts. Managerial oversight (an approach to corporate governance) describes the steps managers and supervisors take to evaluate and track an institution's progress. They oversee/manage to ensure targeted objectives and progress are realized while staying within budget and offering a satisfactory return on investment (Naamati-Schneider, 2022). Most nations have adopted managerial oversight as an essential management technique. In light of this, this form of corporate governance is not just limited to the private sector but is also a crucial component of the public sector (McDermott et al., 2015). Managerial oversight provides advantages to businesses in the public and private sectors, such as increased accountability and efficiency (Parand et al., 2014). Owing to its advantages, it was essential to investigate it further to learn how it impacts



performance.

Different scholars have investigated managerial oversight and its role around the world. Font and Perez Duran (2016) researched European parliament oversight of EU (European Union) entities. The study indicated that there has been an expansion of the agency-creation process at the EU level that has occurred concurrently with the strengthening of the legislative and oversight powers of the European Parliament due to subsequent treaty revisions over the past 20 years. In Africa, things were not different. Notshulwana and Lebakeng (2019) investigated legislative oversight in emerging economies in Africa. The study indicated that separation of powers ensured that legislative oversight promoted accountability by enforcing efficiency and cost-effectiveness while developing people-centered policies and programs necessary to address the various challenges governments at all levels are currently facing. However, many African democracies have found the separation of powers difficult in terms of their capacity for oversight.

Researchers have also used evidence from African nations to understand managerial oversight. For instance, Fagbadebo (2019) investigated legislative accountability and oversight using Nigerian evidence. The study revealed that oversight encompasses financial, strategic, political, legal, administrative, and ethical aspects. Parliament formed oversight bodies to detect and monitor maladministration and public fund abuse and misuse within government entities. Finally, Musiega et al. (2013) explored accountability and monitoring practices and their impact on county health system efficiency in Kenya. The study revealed that weak mechanisms for accountability and budget oversight compromise efficiency.

Studies about managerial oversight at CGs have been documented. Mutisya et al. (2017) examined oversight authority over CGs using the case of Makueni. The study revealed that parties' disciplinary actions against uncooperative Members of County Assemblies (MCAs) have a minimal impact on their ability to oversee county governments and vice versa. When MCAs enhance their exercise of oversight mandates, the county administrators are tempted to control assemblies, minimizing efficiency and performance. Kibwage (2021) investigated the audit committee's influence on the quality of service delivery in Nairobi County. The study's findings proved that the county's service delivery system was in a sorry state. When internal audit procedures are carefully established, they can be avoided, and service delivery improved. Sang and Mugambi (2014) investigated compliance with public procurement regulations and laws in Mombasa County. The study demonstrated that staff knowledge of rules and regulations and personnel competencies are the two most crucial aspects affecting public procurement compliance. The county and the Public Procurement Oversight Authority were advised to collaborate to raise staff understanding of public procurement procedures.

Similar to other counties, Embu has missed out on its performance expectations. According to Mbui and Minja (2023), the performance of Embu County, which was founded in 2013, has fallen short of the majority's hopes for its future development since



that time. For instance, it has been questioned if planning is necessary to attain the county's goals. Leadership disputes between Embu County's government agencies have hampered the adequate provision of public services to the population. The auditors have also questioned Embu County's ability to involve the public enough in county decision-making processes, which would increase responsiveness and accountability of public service (GOK, 2020).

According to the research by Muiruri (2017), Embu County performed poorly because of ineffective governance procedures and violations of established rules. Public hospitals (PHs) managed by the county have also suffered the same fate. Muiruri (2017) indicated that since 2013, the county has experienced irregular and inconsistent medicine ordering patterns. Quarterly cycles recommended by the Ministry of Health have been ignored, leading to essential inadequate drugs and diverting patient flow. The PHs offer unreliable, ineffective, non-affordable, and inefficient healthcare services, threatening the lives of locals. With proper oversight practices, the county can address such challenges, improving the performance of its PHs. In the area of management of PHs, there is a need for more studies to be conducted on managerial oversight to establish the level of customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and efficiency to evaluate performance.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the difficulties African third-world nations face, several are emerging and incorporating managerial oversight into their institutional operations. However, there is little evidence available regarding the role of managerial oversight of PHs on performance. In Kenya, there exists a limited number of studies assessing the relationship between managerial oversight practices and the performance of PHs. Impediments like bureaucracy, management scandals, and employee incompetence, are some public sector barriers hindering the flourishing of PHs performance in Kenya. Additionally, such issues play a part in CG's failure because they do not support the critical function that managerial oversight plays in influencing organizational performance. The Auditor-General Report 2021-2022 noted that CGs are diverting public funds meant for service delivery like health and education to other sectors. This has led to the loss of public funds and a lack of adequate service delivery.

Enhancing the performance of PHs requires further improvement in managerial oversight practices that will ensure efficiency in service delivery and satisfaction of stakeholders. Managerial oversight provides CGs with guidance on enhancing structural management, which will favor their performance effectively. However, the Public Sector in Embu CG seems to lack a precise application of managerial oversight principles which has an impact on PHs performance. For instance, the county has experienced irregular and inconsistent medicine ordering patterns. Quarterly cycles recommended by the Ministry of Health have been ignored, leading to the inadequacy of essential medications. As such, patients move to private hospitals and other hospitals in neighboring counties. If managerial oversight practices could have been applied as expected, such gaps could have been identified and addressed, improving performance. Lack of adequate medicines is likely to lead to poor customer satisfaction. As patients' dissatisfaction increases,



employees remain dissatisfied with their capacity to address their woes. The Auditor-General Report on the County Executive of Embu for the financial year 2021-2022 on payroll review noted that the county has an overdue remittance of Kshs. 500,419,840 which has been deducted from employees and not remitted to insurance firms, retirement schemes, loan repayment to SACCOs, and the County Pension Fund. This has intensified employee dissatisfaction leading to go-slow and industrial strikes in the sector.

Many studies on managerial oversight and performance focus more on public entities, leaving a gap to examine specific public entities like hospitals. PHs are essential in providing accessible healthcare services to all citizens regardless of their background and financial status. This necessitated this study to evaluate how managerial oversight influences the performance of PHs in Embu County.

1.2 Objective of the study

The study objective was to assess the influence of managerial oversight on the performance of PHs in Embu County.

2. Literature Review

This section covers the theory used in the study, the empirical literature, and the conceptual framework.

2.1 Goal-Setting Theory

The study was based on goal-setting theory (GST) that encourages measurable goals. Between the 1960s and 1970s, Gary Latham and Edwin Locke created the GST, a cognitive theory of motivation. It suggests that objectives are the main forces behind the behavior in people and that creating goals affects their persistence, focus, and ferocity. The theory contends that goals' feedback, specificity, acceptance, and difficulty are the primary factors influencing motivation (Okpalaukeje and Chidi, 2022). According to the GST, staff members should be given clear objectives and goals before a system is implemented to monitor their progress. These objectives are typically measurable so that employees can see how far they have accomplished them. The GST model frequently applies to businesses looking to increase employee output. It usually works because it makes it apparent to workers what their manager expects of them and how they are expected to perform tasks, which might encourage them to work more diligently and strategically. Regardless of the benefits of the theory, it may lead to overemphasis on goals, decreasing motivation and commitment to produce desired outcomes (Han, 2018). However, according to Ogbewi, O., 2021 in his application of GST noted that it is an effective tool if a specific framework is adhered to. The theory was adopted in this study because it helps highlight how managerial oversight through goal-setting affects performance.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Effective management supervision policies should be implemented by businesses to guarantee that management and organization are involved in and explicitly dedicated to service delivery, meeting their leadership responsibilities (Hesarzadeh, 2020). In PHs, the 'service owner' position is clearly defined and assigned to the institutional management representative responsible for client service delivery. The dispute over managerial control is part of an ongoing discussion about whether management impacts



performance in PHs.

Susmadiana et al. (2014) indicated that an organization itself and the manager's level (personal qualities) are the main drivers of management oversight. This study on managerial drivers concluded that managerial oversight has a greater influence and has a significant effect on employee performance. According to a study by Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2013), a person's situational characteristics and rationality affect how much managerial oversight they exercise. The specific elements are tailored using the concepts from the work of Hambrick and Finkelstein. Institutional performance differs by country as oversight (Liston-Heyes and Juillet, 2022). The specialized service delivery strategy and management plan established by the PHs are monitored through managerial oversight, and any potential incidents are immediately dealt with.

The institution's service delivery policy is tasked with exercising discretion regarding the strategic direction and approach that aids in achieving managerial oversight (Susmadiana et al., 2021). As a result, the service delivery policy will provide PHs room to assess gaps, the range of specialized services, and Social Health Insurance Coverage (SHIC) if it is appropriately implemented. This would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the services provided by PHs in their capacity. A management supervision policy focuses on identifying any problems or deviations and working to fix them. However, top-level management can use the management supervision policy to perform self-appraisal, enhancing managerial effectiveness in businesses. An efficient management oversight policy should be able to specify performance requirements, operational goals, and flexibility restrictions (Orozco, 2020).

Information technology (IT.) designed for managerial oversight does not produce enough data and information to support the high level of corrective action required for risk management, according to Pierce et al. (2015). Furthermore, they do not produce data that can be tested for accountability. Again, such agendas in PHs are frequently completed by specialist accounting units. However, there is insufficient understanding of the significance of including IT systems in managing PHs. For these reasons, the study detailed how implementing IT systems in PHs will help to encourage managerial monitoring, hence establishing responsibility. As previously stated, IT systems are not used enough in management, especially in Third World nations. This is why the research study offered data evaluating the value of IT in the management of PHs. The study assessed explicitly whether computer applications should be used as the foundation for IT oversight systems. The report also covered the requirement for a well-defined regulatory framework surrounding laws and regulations to control the adoption and usage of IT, particularly in developing nations.

A recent study shows that policy guidelines give the entire organization a framework for operating in terms of managerial oversight (Akmal, et al., 2022). According to Van Niekerk and Sebakamotse (2020), policy guidelines allow for the efficient execution of management oversight in the organization. As a result, the study evaluated the necessity for policy guidelines within essential domains such as group conduct, job orientation, and employee obligations. By doing this, the study helped to clarify important questions about the value of putting managerial supervision systems in place and to open the way



for legal and moral entitlements. Policy guidelines ensure compliance, assist businesses in avoiding mistakes, streamline internal operations, and promote accountability and responsibility. These lay the groundwork for applying managerial control, enhancing the effectiveness of the company. Few research studies have investigated the connection between corporate objectives and managerial oversight, although several studies assess how setting corporate goals affects performance in PHs.

Terziev and Arabaska (2016) contend that although businesses have a responsibility to society, there are several important issues that they should focus on, such as innovation strategy, corporate social responsibility, and managerial supervision investments. Loch and Sommer (2019) determined that elements like company goals are crucial for assessing executive oversight. According to some academics analyzing how corporate goals affect managerial oversight, businesses need to have corporate goals to guarantee sustainability. Stein et al. (2021) highlighted that companies should remain competitive while offering top-notch oversight services on employee engagement. Firms must set attainable and consistent objectives with the organization's vision and mission for this competition to exist.

Martela (2023) revealed that a company should create corporate goals for cost reduction, risk management, and brand value enhancement to become competitive and sustainable. Through managerial oversight, these business goals can be leveraged to improve administration. The study also demonstrates that corporate plans for cost-cutting and brand-building are not the sole measures of a company's sustainability; for a company to be sustainable, its goals must be clearly articulated and met. However, after gathering and analyzing data, the researcher discovered that relatively few PHs have operational company goals that affect their performance. In light of this, the study examined the requirement for incorporating unmistakably specified corporate objectives in managing PHs and assessing their success. The study also examined the impact of the PH's purpose and vision, specifically whether they are periodically revised to encourage good performance.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (see Figure 1) examined how the independent (managerial oversight) and dependent (PH's performance) variables relate to one another.

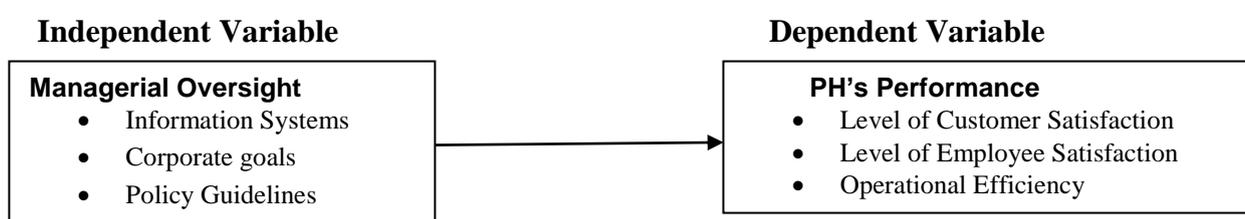


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

The study used a descriptive design, which helps to explain the study's key elements logically and ensure that the research achieves its goals and completely solves the

research problem (Lewis, 2015). Sileyew (2019) highlighted that a descriptive design promotes impartial observation and description of the study's key characteristics. Additionally, descriptive research helps assess the current situation regarding knowledge availability, individual(s) or group beliefs, behavior, public views, and accessible capacities (Pieper et al., 2020) In the study investigating the influence of managerial oversight on the performance of PHs in Embu County, Kenya, this method of evaluating research scenarios was pertinent. Memon et al. (2020) recommended a threshold of greater than 50 and less than 500 for behavioral studies (such as the current one), a sample of 140 was recruited from the study population of 350 workers and clients.

Table 1: Sample Size

Category	Designation	Freq.	Percentage	Sample size tally				Sample size
				Embu Teaching & Referral Hospital	Runyenjes Level 4 Hospital	Siakago Level 4 Hospital	Kiritiri Level 3 Hospital	
PHs Health Workers	Nurses-in-Charge	4	1.14	1	1	1	1	4
	Ordinary Nurses	69	19.71	6	6	6	6	24
	Clinical Officers-in-charge	4	1.14	1	1	1	1	4
	Ordinary Clinical Officers	69	19.71	6	6	6	6	24
	PHs Administrators	4	1.14	1	1	1	1	4
Total Clients of PHs	N	150	42.84	20	20	20	20	60
Grand Total	N	200	57.16					80
		350	100.00					140

Source: Author (2020)

The study used an empirical methodology. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2015) highlighted that first-hand data is gathered during empirical research. Questionnaires were the research tool employed in this study to collect first-hand data. Using self-administered questionnaires, the study's primary data were gathered from healthcare providers and their patients without the researcher's involvement. Both closed-ended and open-ended surveys were used. While open-ended surveys dealt with questions narrowed down by provided possibilities, closed-ended questionnaires used a framework based on respondent knowledge and personal experiences.

This study's quantitative results were examined using descriptive statistics through the SPSS version 24.0 software. The descriptive statistics were presented as percentages, mean scores, and frequencies. Ms Excell was used to draw graphs and charts. Utilizing the content analysis method, qualitative data was also examined. The content from multiple sources, including field observations and questionnaires from respondents, was analyzed using the content analysis method. This strategy was used to assess the experiences of health professionals and PH clients. Findings were presented in charts



4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Policy Guidelines

Table 1: PHs have Policy Guidelines that aid their Day-to-Day Operations.

Stakeholders	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Health Workers Freq.	0	3	33	21	3	60
Health workers (%)	0	5	55	35	5	100
Clients Freq.	2	5	37	29	7	80
Clients (%)	2.5	6.3	46.3	36.3	8.8	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

According to Table (2), only 2.5% of clients strongly disagreed that PHs had policy guidelines that aided their day-to-day operations. In comparison, 6.3% disagreed, 46.3% were neither in agreement nor disagreement, 8.8% strongly agreed and 36.3% agreed. Customers of PHs are not sufficiently happy with PHs' policy guidelines, which impacts performance. The above findings align with Muchelule's (2018) findings which agree that oversight initiatives influence the firm's performance and need to be occasionally reviewed. Additionally, it further revealed that 5.0% of health workers disagreed that PHs had policy guidelines that helped in their day-to-day running operations, 55.0% neither agreed nor disagreed, 35.0% agreed, and 5.0% strongly disagreed. Health workers were not adequately satisfied with the effectiveness of policy guidelines. Embu CG should structure effective policy guidelines for PHs that positively influence organizational operations overall performance.

4.2 Information Systems

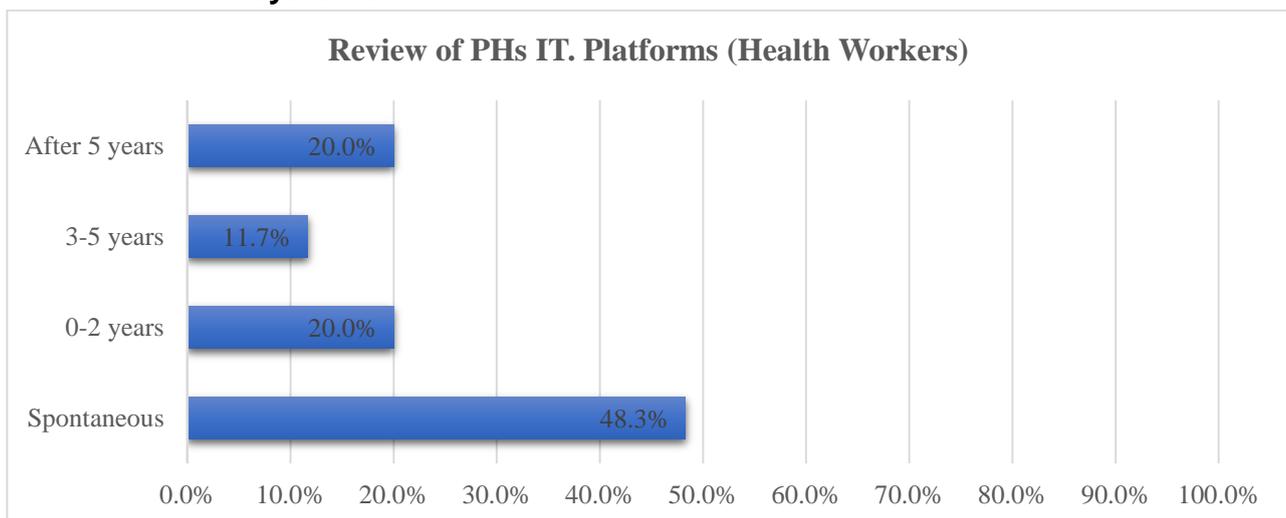


Figure 2: Review of PHs IT Platforms (Health Workers)

Source: Field Data (2021).

Figure (2) shows, 48.3% health professionals believed that IT was reviewed spontaneously (without preparation, on an impulse), 20.0% between 0 and 2 years, 11.7% between 3-5 years, and 20.0% after five years. Most respondents acknowledged

that spontaneous, unplanned reviews negatively impacted performance. The results of this study supported those of Muchelule (2018), indicating project monitoring influences performance. Therefore, there is need for a planned review of PHs IT. platforms to avoid spontaneity. In this case, there is need for annual review before the beginning of every financial year.

4.3 Corporate Goals

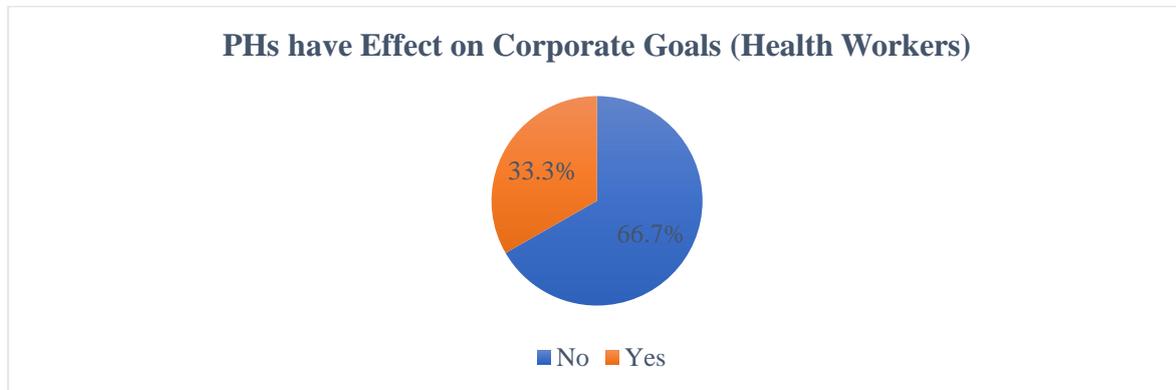


Figure 3: PHs have Effect on Corporate Goals (Health Workers)

Source: Field Data (2021)

Figure (3) shows that 33.3% of health professionals believed that PHs had successful corporate goals, while 66.7% disagreed on the same. Health professionals claim that PHs lack practical corporate goals. The study recommended that Embu County should further implement corporate goals in PHs to help management develop successful team goals and provide general direction for the organization. Additionally, there is need for a review of current corporate goals to incorporate those that are effective and realistic to enhance performance of PHs.

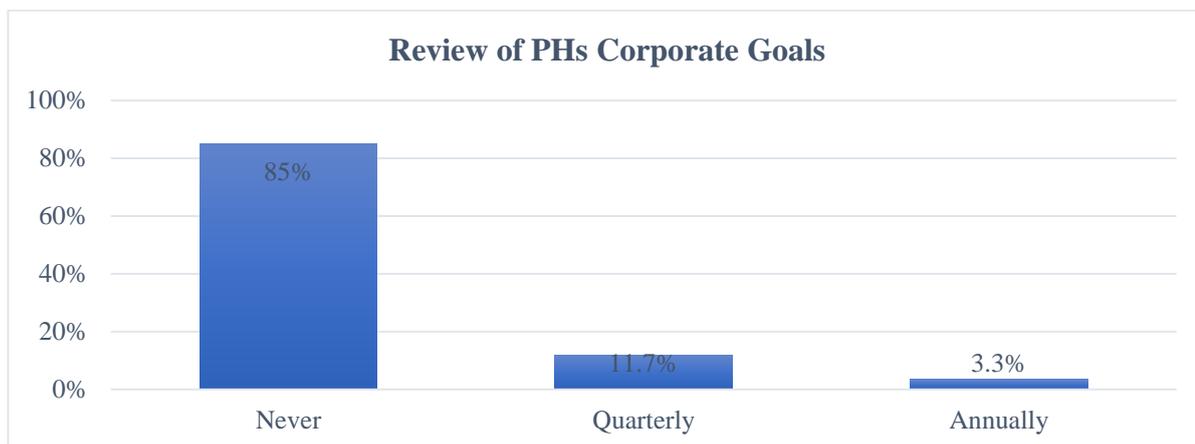


Figure 4: Review of PHs Corporate Goals (Health Workers)

Source: Field Data (2021)

Figure (4) revealed that 85.0% of health workers felt that PH's corporate goals had never been reviewed, 11.7% reviewed quarterly, and 3.3% reviewed annually. PHs do not check their corporate goals, which negatively influences performance. Therefore, there is a need for a planned review of PHs corporate goals to address the problem. In this case, there is a need for an annual review before the beginning of every financial year.



Figure 5: Steps PHs Management Can Take to Ensure They Develop Corporate Goals that Enhance Performance (Clients)

Source: Field Data (2021)

Figure (5) shows that 11.3% of clients believed hiring qualified staff would be a step toward creating corporate objectives to improve performance. In comparison, 33.8% believed that improved performance is achieved with adequate motivation, 8.8% a review of prior and current corporate goals, 21.3% the introduction of achievable corporate goals, 11.0% the discipline of health workers who do not work toward achieving the set corporate goals, 6.3% the prioritization of corporate goals based on merit, and 7.5% other factors. This indicated that compelling health worker motivation was crucial for achieving company goals. The above findings are consistent with those of Anyim, Chidi, and Badejo (2012), indicating that employee motivation is one of the tools that managers can use to enhance employee performance and organizational growth. Embu CG needs to be cognizant of the fact that money fails to motivate employees if it fails to identify the relationship between efforts and rewards. The county should adopt and implement the Auditor-General 2021-2022 report and ensure it remits overdue deductions to relevant entities. Additionally, timely payment of salaries and allowances, job promotion and professional training will go a long way in ensuring health workers are motivated thus enhancing performance.

Furthermore, proper motivation of health workers, employing qualified personnel, the introduction of corporate goals that are achievable, review of previous and current corporate plans, prioritizing corporate goals on merit, and discipline of health workers who do not work towards the achievement of set corporate goals enhance performance. The research results concur with those of Musiega et al. (2023), indicating oversight's influence on healthy system efficiency in the delivery of services.

5. Discussions

Based on the managerial oversight variable indicators, on IT, the study revealed that 48.3% of health workers felt that I.S. was reviewed spontaneously (without planning, impulse review), 20.0% reviewed between 0-2 years, 11.7% reviewed between 3-5 years and 20.0% reviewed after five years. Most respondents admitted that IT systems were reviewed spontaneously without prior planning, affecting performance. The findings of

this study are consistent with the findings by Muchelule (2018), who agrees that project monitoring influence the firm's performance. A planned annual review of IT platforms is paramount to avoid spontaneity in the review process.

On policy guidelines, this study revealed that 55.0% of health workers neither agreed nor disagreed that PHs had policy guidelines that helped in their day-to-day running operations. Health workers were not adequately satisfied with the effectiveness of policy guidelines. Moreover, the study revealed that 46.3% of clients neither agreed nor disagreed that PHs had policy guidelines that helped in their day-to-day running operations. Clients of PHs were not adequately satisfied with PHs policy guidelines, which affect performance. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Musiega et al. (2023), who noted that policy guidelines ensure compliance, help firms avoid errors, streamline internal processes, and increase accountability and responsibility. Embu CG should structure effective policy guidelines for PHs that positively influence organizational operations and overall performance.

On managerial oversight of variable indicators under corporate goals, the study revealed that 66.7% of health workers said PHs did not have practical corporate goals. According to health workers, PHs did not have reasonable corporate goals. Besides, the study revealed that 85.0% of health workers felt that PH's corporate plans had never been reviewed. PHs did not check their corporate goals, which influenced performance. The study's findings are consistent with those of Mutisya et al. (2017), who revealed that corporate objectives are linked to managerial oversight. PHs do not check their corporate goals, which negatively influences performance. Therefore, there is a need for a planned review of PHs corporate goals to address the problem. In this case, there is a need for an annual review before the beginning of every financial year.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The performance of PHs was influenced by managerial oversight. However, administrative control was difficult without a service delivery policy that offered strategic direction and policy discretion. The incorporation of IT-based computer programs and systems was relatively minor. The systems that PHs are now using did not produce any data that could be used for accountability purposes. PHs lacked carefully defined policy guidelines that would enable them to meet the demands of managerial control. PHs should include dynamic company objectives that guarantee their long-term viability and expertise. However, corporate goals should be developed to strengthen the brand and reputation of PHs and boost efficiency and effective service delivery. Regarding managerial oversight, the study detailed how implementing IT systems in PHs can help to foster oversight and give accountability. The report covered the requirement for a well-defined regulatory framework surrounding laws and regulations to control the adoption and usage of IT systems, particularly in emerging nations. The study also showed that corporate objectives for cost reduction and brand enhancement are not the only measures of a company's sustainability.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

The study advised PHs to follow and implement the best managerial oversight principles



to avoid pointless conflicts with stakeholders, decrease consumer complaints, and ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. Additionally, the study also advised PHs to adopt the goal-setting theory framework as it supports the adoption of managerial oversight, significantly improving PHs' performance. Moreover, the study advocated for the County Department of Health to be more involved in giving investment authority to functional managers who collaborate closely with other senior managers to optimize managerial oversight processes. This investment decision would guarantee that all stakeholders participate in initiatives or programs that improve performance.

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